

18.—GLEANINGS

Mobbing of Crows

There has recently been some correspondence in 'Country Life' regarding the mobbing of individual rooks by other members of the same species. The Handbook of British Birds mentions this habit and refers to G. K. Yeates's 'The Life of the Rook' in which he expresses the opinion that only mating birds are mobbed. He further comments that this mobbing takes place only when the mating is promiscuous and does not extend to legitimate pairing. The data on which he makes these remarks is very limited but as some kind of mobbing certainly takes place among the crows in India, it would be interesting to observe this more closely and try and account for it here. A somewhat similar process of 'trial by council' and 'mobbing' has been noticed among the mynahs also.

Catching Goshawks

'Kil' in 'Flushing Chukor' (*Onlooker*, January 1950) records keeping awake all night, a goshawk roosting in a tree, by torch and fire, and then catching it by hand the following morning, weary with sleep!

The mating of Partridges

H. B. C. Pollard in 'British and American Gamebirds' (Eyre and Spottiswode, 1945) writes on page 11—'The sexual union of any species of partridge is not generally seen. It is done in the air and is over in a flash. It is a very good test of the credibility or otherwise of anyone who chatters about birds to draw him out gently about this sexual act of partridges. If he says he has seen a cock treading a hen you can write him off as an unreliable witness!'

Stalking the Spanish Ibex

G. Kenneth Whitehead in *Country Life* of 25th February 1949 writes that in 1905 the number of Ibex at Gredos was thought to be 2 males and 5 females. Twelve years after Gredos had been turned into a Royal Reserve the numbers had risen to about 400 and today there are probably about 2000. The Ibex reserve, marked out by 94 posts covers approximately 400 square miles and is supervised by a staff of 16, consisting of a technical inspector who is an expert hunter.

19.—REPLACEMENT OF FANGS IN SNAKES

Might it be possible to arrange for some scientific workers to mark the functional fang of Indian snakes whilst collecting their venom and keep them alive long enough to show whether the ancylosed fang is ever replaced by those found loose in the *vagina dentis*?

It is said that, whilst extracting venom from South African snakes, a fang is sometimes wrenched out of its socket but this must surely be the semi-ancylosed twin fang which not uncommonly occurs alongside the ancylosed fang and is presumed to replace it.

The existence of extra fangs in serial development remains a mystery and the likelihood of any of them revolving to replace the ancylosed fang so as to serve to emit poison through the one and only duct leading to the poison gland lacks experimental proof.

My own experience supports the claim that one can judge of the length of a snake and even help to determine the identity of a species by multiplying the length of one of its teeth. This would be most improbable if it were true that the teeth were constantly shed and replaced.

BRITANNIA BUILDINGS,
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20.—A BIOMETRICAL STUDY OF *HILSA ILISHA* (HAM.) IN THE GODAVARI RIVER*

During this spawning migration the fish abstains from feeding. 1696 and 1943 specimens of male and female *Hilsa* collected from the river below the irrigation anicuts during the spawning season (July to October) of 1947 and 1948 were examined for total length, height and weight of body and for the number of rings found on scales of the pectoral region. The results are presented in tables I and II.

TABLE I

Showing relation between length, height, weight and number of rings of 1696 male Hilsa

Length in inches	Height in inches	Weight in oz.	No. of rings	No. of fish examined
11.1—12.0	4	14	1	10
12.1—13.0	4	16	1	10
13.1—14.0	—	—	—	—
14.1—15.0	4	24	2, 4 & 7	107
15.1—16.0	4.5	30	2, 4 & 6	978
16.1—17.0	4.8	39	1, 2, 3 & 4	512
17.1—18.0	5	45	6 & 7	79

* Communicated with the kind permission of the Director of Fisheries, Madras.